

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend claims 1 and 3-12.

1. (Currently amended). A method of operating a strip casting machine for producing a metal strip by a continuous pouring of a metal melt between two, casting gap-forming, casting rolls (1, 2), wherein for a lateral limitation of a casting gap, there are provided lateral seals (10) provided with sealing plates (11), which sealing plates (11) are placed or pressed against end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined placement or press-on force a value of which is adjustable, **characterized in that** the sealing plates (11) are placed in repeatable ~~stop-and-go~~ go-and-stop steps, wherein in a go-step, the sealing plates (11) are placed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined force and time, and are held in the ~~placed~~ stop position for a predetermined time.

2. (Original). A method according to claim 1, **characterized in that** the placement force of the sealing plates (11) against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2), if needed, is periodically varied.

3. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, **characterized in that** holding time of the sealing plates (11) in the placement position is varied.

4. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one of claims 1 through 3~~, **characterized in that** the placement force and the placement time is adapted to a sealing behavior of the sealing plates (11) during a casting time.

5. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or several of claims 1 through 4~~, **characterized in that** the holding time is noticeably longer than the placement time.

6. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or several of claims 1 through 5~~, **characterized in that** in the placement phase, the sealing plates, for a relatively short time, are pressed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) and are subsequently released from the press-on force and are held in a position before the “stop-and-go” placement is carried out.

7. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 5 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~ **characterized in that** the holding time is a double of
the placement time.

8. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 5 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~, **characterized in that** the holding time exceeds the
placement time maximum in 300 times.

9. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~, **characterized in that** a length of the placement time
is adjusted dependent on a diameter of the casting rolls (1, 2), material of the
end surfaces of the casting rolls, a value of the pressed-on or placement force,
speed, steel quality, material of the sealing plates (11), and/or other factors.

10. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~, **characterized in that** the length of the placement
time amounts to from 1 to 30 sec.

11. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~, **characterized in that** the sealing plates-containing

lateral seals (10) are displaced or pivoted in vertical and/or horizontal direction before respective placements.

12. (Currently amended). A method according to claim 1 ~~one or~~
~~several preceding claims~~, **characterized in that** the placement is effected with
an application pressure between .5 and 1.0 N/mm².